

where it will benefit them for consistent encoding or in software operation. Appendix B provides an example for further customizing the eadlocal.ent file for your institution.

Headings

It is important to maintain consistency within an institution in finding aid section headings to avoid confusing users or creating undue difficulties in EAD creation. For example, a container list heading should always be "Container List" as indicated in the recommended templates, never "Container Listing" or "List of Containers." Exceptions may be made depending on the structure of the finding aid being encoded, but these exceptions should be well-documented for consistent application. The <head> is a generic element. Information in the <head> element assists readers in identifying major sections of the finding aid, but does not provide information that is unique to the collection being described nor does it provide a useful search term. For headings, mixed case lettering is recommended rather than all UPPERCASE.

In general, a heading should look like this:

```
<scopecontent>
<head>Collection Overview</head>
<p>...</p>
</scopecontent>
```

Special Characters

Special characters are frequently found in EAD-encoded XML documents, especially for finding aids with significant non-English content. EAD recognizes either ISO 8879 character references or Unicode Hexadecimal References. As seen below Unicode hexadecimals are not nearly as intuitive as ISO 8879. See the *EAD application guidelines section 6.5.2.1* (<http://www.loc.gov/ead/ag/>) for further discussion of special character entities in EAD.

For a list of commonly used special characters and their ISO 8879 and Unicode hexadecimal equivalents, visit <http://www.ncecho.org/ncead/documents/unicode.htm>.

Whether using ISO 8879 or Unicode Hexadecimal References all entities should be checked for proper display. This is not always an easy task. Popular web browsers support special character display differently from each other and from different versions of the same software. Unicode Hexadecimal References appear to be the developing standard for XML, and these guidelines encourage their use, although for the purposes of proper display, ISO 8879 references are an alternative. As noted above, there may be a need for retrospective conversion at a later date.

While many characters may be represented with ISO or Unicode entities, it is not worthwhile to use them for common ASCII characters such as punctuation, hyphens, quotes, or parenthesis. Instead, focus should be placed on providing correct representation of alphabetic characters and diacritics for English and other languages. Exceptions include